

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY AND MAINTAIN YOUR SEWAGE SYSTEM

This brochure was prepared for the Home Owners, Home Builders, Residents, Septage Pumpers, Realtors and Lending Institutions in the OCPC area. Your On-Site Sewage DISPOSAL System can provide trouble free service for many years if maintained properly. The following topics are addressed:

- **ON SITE SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEM INFORMATION.**
- **HOW TO LOCATE YOUR SEPTIC TANK OR CESSPOOL.**
- **INDICATIONS OF A FAILING SYSTEM.**
- **HOW YOU CAN INSPECT YOUR SEPTIC TANK OR CESSPOOL.**
- **SOME REASONS WHY YOUR SYSTEM CAN FAIL.**
- **REASONABLE STEPS TO TAKE TO PREVENT SYSTEM FAILURES.**
- **MAINTENANCE INFORMATION.**

ON-SITE SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEM INFORMATION

On-site wastewater disposal systems (septic system) or cesspools in older homes provide for the treatment and disposal of the wastewater. Cesspools and septic systems have been known, with proper MAINTENANCE, to perform effectively for many years.

Your on-site disposal system is just as important to you as your furnace. A new system of any type or repairs to the old one are very costly. Cost variation is due to the type of failure, soil conditions, water table and lot size. Proper maintenance is the least expensive method.

Cesspools are not allowed in new construction, but a large number of our older homes are still using them. From these homes the building sewer (pipe) goes directly to the cesspool. The cesspool is a large pit and the sidewalls could be either concrete block or fieldstone, with an earth bottom. The lighter solids and grease (scum) float at the top and the heavier solids (sludge) settle to the bottom. The liquid seeps through the perforated blocks or the irregular stones. Life span is limited, although with PROPER MAINTENANCE they could function effectively for many, many years. Should the cesspool overflow, it is usually because the pores in the sidewall and the surrounding soil have been clogged with solids. Normally this occurs from lack of periodical inspections and infrequent pumping out of the scum and sludge. It is recommended that there should be an annual inspection.

The approximate composition of household sewage is 40% toilet, 15% laundry, 30% bathing, 10% kitchen and 5% miscellaneous.

HOW TO LOCATE YOUR SEPTIC TANK OR CESSPOOL

Locating and yearly inspection of your disposal system yourself can cut costs, providing you follow the inspection procedure. If help is needed contact your Board of Health. Recommended procedure to follow if needed:

1. Contact your Board of Health to see if they have a plan on file.
2. If your plan is not on file, follow as recommended:
 - See if you can find a concrete or metal manhole cover usually located in an area of tall green grass; or where there is a depression on the premises where the grass does not grow; or where there is rapid melting of snow.
 - If ground surface inspection is of no help: locate the building sewer (main house drain) in the cellar. Measure 10' from the foundation by following the direction of the pipe (it may be more). Probe the soil with a thin metal rod. The septic tank or cesspool cover should be 12" or less below the surface (older homes could be more than 12" below the ground surface).
 - Record the location and give a copy to your local Board of Health.

INDICATIONS OF A FAILING SYSTEM

- Mushy soil above or near the septic tank, cesspool, leaching field, or liquid surfacing in these areas.
- Foul odor from sewage area, nearby streams, wetlands and etc.
- Any backup of sinks or toilets, not caused by blockage of internal pipes within the house.
- Tall green grass above or near the leaching area, septic tank or cesspool.

HOW YOU CAN INSPECT YOUR SEPTIC TANK OR CESSPOOL

1. Remove cover or covers.
2. With a rod or a stick, measure the scum and sludge layers, if they are more than 1/3 the volume of the septic tank or cesspool, it should be pumped out. Care should be taken to insure that sludge is removed ,from the bottom.
3. Be sure that both the inlet and outlet tees are in place and free of any solids.
4. For assistance on any cesspool or septic tank problem, call your local Board of Health.

SOME REASONS WHY YOUR SYSTEM CAN FAIL

- POOR LOCATION for your leaching area. Soil is not pervious enough, the water table is high or there is inadequate percolation of liquids through the soil.
- EXCESSIVE SOLIDS in the cesspool, or if there is a septic tank, there could be an overflow of solids into leaching area.

- POOR INSTALLATION: Drain pipes and distribution pipes not properly graded, or septic tank is not level.
- DESIGNED too small for the present demand.
- DRAIN PIPES may become clogged with solids, or roots may grow into the leaching area.

REASONABLE STEPS TO TAKE TO PREVENT SYSTEM FAILURES

- DO NOT install garbage disposals, as they are a leading factor of clogged systems.
- DO NOT put solids or sanitary napkins, paper towels, grease, hair, oil or coffee grounds down the drain.
- INSPECT OR PUMP OUT on-site systems annually. Do not wait until you have a problem.
- CONSERVE ON WATER: Excess water can create problems. Install water saving devices wherever possible. .DO NOT put additives into your system. Medicines, paint, paint thinner, disinfectants, pesticides and acids will only kill the bacteria which is needed to decompose the organic matter.
- DO NOT use enzymes or acid for treating your septic tank or cesspool.
- DO NOT plant shrubs or trees with deep roots near your leaching area.
- DO NOT allow heavy equipment to drive over leaching area.

MAINTENANCE INFORMATION

Annual INSPECTION and periodical PUMPING is your maintenance program. Immediately investigate signs of failure.

This brochure has been prepared and printed by the Old Colony Planning Council, 208 Water Quality Program through a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency under the provisions of Section 208 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 (P.L.92-500). Grant #P00105401.

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